

EDWARDS AFB PIO

NEWS RELEASE

An SR-71 type aircraft <sup>operated</sup> ~~owned~~ by the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation is missing and presumed down in a remote area east of Las Vegas, Nevada. The aircraft, unreported since 1600 PST yesterday, had sufficient fuel to remain aloft only until \_\_\_\_\_.

The missing aircraft, based at Edwards AFB, California, was on a routine test flight mission. Only the test pilot, a civilian, was aboard.

Search parties have been dispatched to comb the area in an effort to locate the downed aircraft and determine the fate of the pilot.

PRESS RELEASE  
EDWARDS AFB PIO

The wreckage of the missing SR-71 type aircraft was spotted from the air late yesterday approximately four miles southwest of the town of Leith, Nevada.

An Air Force helicopter crew who examined the wreckage stated that there was no apparent evidence that the civilian test pilot who was at the controls at the time of the mishap was still in the aircraft at the time of impact.

An intensive ground and air search for the missing pilot is continuing by military and civilian authorities.

An Air Force team of investigators has been dispatched to conduct an investigation into the cause of the crash.

*This has been  
released.*

PRESS RELEASE  
EDWARDS AFB PIO ←  
RELEASE TIME: 1700 PST JANUARY 7, 1967

The pilot of the Lockheed SR-71 type experimental  
aircraft which crashed Thursday in Nevada, was  
Walter L. Ray, 33, of 7900 Sarrelane Street, Canoga  
Park, California. Search for the pilot is continuing.

NELLIS AFB PIO

NEWS RELEASE

An SR-71 type aircraft owned by the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation (Category I) crashed at 1615 PST hours yesterday in a remote area 75 miles east of Las Vegas.

The civilian test pilot, Walter L. Ray, 33, of 7900 Sarrelane Street, Conoga Park, California, (ejected safely from the plane) or (was killed in the crash).

The aircraft, based at Edwards Air Force Base, California, was undergoing flight testing at the time of the accident. Cause of the crash is not known at this time and an Air Force team has been assigned to conduct an investigation.

Ray, a flight test engineer employed by Hughes Aircraft Corporation, was on loan to Lockheed at the time.

(Further inquiries to be referred to Lockheed).

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NEWS RELEASE  
LOCKHEED OFFICE OF INFORMATION

The pilot of the Lockheed SR-71 type experimental aircraft which crashed Thursday in Nevada, was Walter L. Ray, 33, of 7900 Sarrelane Street, Canoga Park, California.

Mr. Ray was born on December 29, 1933 at Chandlerville, Illinois, the son of the late Oral C. Ray and Thelma Amelia Friend Ray of Havana, Illinois. He attended elementary and high schools in Havana, Illinois and majored in aeronautical engineering at the University of Illinois.

He entered the U. S. Air Force as an aviation cadet in 1953 and underwent pilot training at Lackland AFB, Texas. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in March of 1955. Mr. Ray served in the U. S. Air Force from 1955 until 1962 at stations in this country and in Europe.

Mr. Ray attained the rank of Captain and in July of 1962 resigned from the Air Force to accept a position as a flight test engineer with the Hughes Aircraft Corporation in Los Angeles. At the time of the accident, he was on temporary loan to Lockheed and was engaged in the flight testing of special equipment. Mr. Ray was married to the late Marlene Estelle Smith on 27 May 1960. She died on November 1, 1963. He was recently remarried to Diane Carole Williams of Glendale, California.

Mr. Ray also has a sister, Elmora E. Cealka of Elkhart, Indiana and a brother Vernon O. Ray of Orange, California.

NEWS RELEASE  
LOCKHEED OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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Mr. Ray attained the rank of Captain and in July of 1962 resigned from the Air Force to accept a position as a flight test engineer with the Hughes Aircraft Corporation in Los Angeles. At the time of the accident, he was engaged in special equipment tests for Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, Burbank, California. He was recently married to Diane Carole Williams of Glendale, California.

Mr. Ray also has a sister, Elmora E. Cealka of Elkhart, Indiana, and a brother Vernon O. Ray of Orange, California.

PRESS RELEASE

The body of the pilot of the Lockheed experimental SR-71 type aircraft which crashed in Nevada on Thursday was found late today 10 miles east of the crash site near ~~Lieth~~<sup>LETH</sup>, Nevada.

The civilian test pilot, 37 year old Walter L. Ray of 7900 Farrel Lane ~~25000/3000~~ Street, Canoga Park, California, was spotted by a search aircraft and was reached by a ground rescue team shortly after the reported sighting. The specific cause of death has not been determined.

Mr. Ray is survived by his wife, ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Diane Carole, of the home address, his mother, Thelma ~~Amerlia~~<sup>AMELIA FRIEND</sup> Ray of HAVANA, Ill.. a sister, Elmora E. ~~CEALKA~~, of Elkhart, Ind., and a brother, Vernon O. Ray of Orange, California.

THIS IS A COPY OF THE PRESS RELEASE  
THAT WILL GO OUT AFTER MRS. RAY HAS  
BEEN NOTIFIED. AT PRESENT (08/0136Z), MRS. RAY  
WAS NOT AT HOME AND HAD NOT BEEN NOTIFIED OF  
HUSBAND'S DEATH. RELEASE WILL BE MADE THROUGH  
EDWARDS PIO WITH COPIES TO HAC, LAC AND CCR.

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Los Angeles Times Article  
by Marvin Miles  
7 January 1967

Excerpt

"No comment from the military or government officials about the speculation that the SR-71 may also be flying sky-spy missions for the Central Intelligence Agency as did the U-2 before it was shot down over Russia."

STATINTL

Above obtained via telephone conversation from  
Security Officer at Edwards.

Deputy

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